Gold Plating Description Wears Thin

To the Editor:

I always enjoy Kevin J. Anderson's Historical Notes. However, I would like to suggest two emendations to the recent one (*MRS Bulletin*, January 1993) on plating metals. First, a 0.05-micron decorative gold layer should not be called gold plating. According to the Federal Trade Commission Guidelines for precious metals in jewelry, to be called "gold plated," the layer of gold must be at least of 10K fineness and at least seven millionths of one inch thick. If thinner than this, it can only be termed "gold flashed" or "gold washed." Second, the metal fusion process once used for Sheffield silver plate is still in use for gold, where "gold filled," "gold overlay," etc. imply that at least 10K gold constitutes at least 1/20th of the weight of metal in the entire article. Many other specifications are given in the FTC guidelines. I thought you might want to know this.

Kurt Nassau
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Help for the Unemployed

To the Editor:

I am concerned over the fall election statements of the MRS Officers and Councillors. There is a great number of unemployed young scientists out there, and this number will presumably continue to grow. Yet *not even one* candidate cared enough to mention this fact.

From the point of view of a young scientist who potentially will be without a job sometime in the future, this makes me wonder if MRS is really an organization I should support financially and by going to its conferences.

From the point of view of the vitality of the organization itself—I think there is something substantial missing if the older generation does not care about the younger.

Senior researchers, please do something about this issue. If not for us young people, then for the organization itself.

Eugene Tarnow
Los Alamos National Laboratory

Response:

Thank you for raising this important issue in the *Bulletin*. First, I would like to assure you that the current extremely difficult job situation and resulting unemployment among young scientists is a matter of serious concern to the Officers and Councillors of MRS.

MRS offers a reduced meeting registration for unemployed and retired members, and for recent graduates as yet unemployed. The Society also offers retired and unemployed membership options at reduced rates. During the last Council meeting in December, we discussed this area at length and it was then concluded that these options may not be widely enough known. So we have taken steps to better publicize them and I have appointed a task force to look at the membership aspect more closely.

The Society offers two additional services to members searching for employment: Job Placement Centers at the MRS Spring and Fall Meetings (you need not be present to participate), and a free Position Wanted ad in the *MRS Bulletin*.

We know well, however, that the above actions serve only as "band aids" and do not solve this problem at the root-cause level. The lack of candidate statements, in fact, may indicate a difficulty in knowing what action to take on the larger scale to impact this very distressing issue. I can say that our immediate Past President, Slade Cargill, and I have made quite a number of visits to Washington over the past year to represent the interests of the materials research community, and have often pointed out the need for additional funding and other ways to stimulate the market and make effective use of the many talented people who want to teach and carry out research.

I sincerely hope that soon we will turn the corner on this problem that is creating disappointment and disillusionment in those very people upon whom our future depends.

Tom Picraux
MRS President
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